



## STAY SAFE, STAY ACTIVE

When the weather is nice, you may head outside to participate in your favorite sports and recreational activities. They are a great way to have fun and get some exercise, and proper planning can help keep you safe while you play. Whether you participate in team sports like basketball, or other activities such as biking, tennis, golf, swimming, or running, there are some potential injuries to be aware of before you start.

### Common Injuries and Precautionary Tips

Physical activity can help you look good, feel good, and perform at your best. However, if proper safety measures are not followed, you risk injuring yourself and potentially those around you.

#### Head Injury

While contact sports receive much of the attention surrounding concussions, cycling actually leads to the highest number of head-injuries treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms, with football, baseball and softball, basketball, and water sports rounding out the top five.<sup>1</sup> Also, if you have had a concussion before, you are at a higher risk of sustaining another concussion.<sup>2</sup> Keep the following safety precautions in mind to avoid head injury:

- Many head and neck injuries can be avoided by wearing a properly fitting helmet during activities where you could be hit in the head or fall.<sup>3</sup> Make sure you wear the proper helmet for the activity you're participating in, and service and replace your helmet as needed. Also make sure you are following all DoD and DON policies for helmet use.
- You do not have to lose consciousness to have a concussion.<sup>1</sup> If you suspect you have a concussion, stop any physical activity and make sure to receive an evaluation from a health care provider.<sup>2</sup>
- You should be taken to the emergency room right away if you experience any of the following symptoms after being hit in the head: appear drowsy; have one pupil larger than the other; have convulsions, seizures or unusual behavior; are getting increasingly confused, restless or agitated; cannot recognize familiar people or places; and/or lose consciousness.<sup>5</sup>



## Heat Illness

Your body's temperature rises drastically during physical activity, and your body produces sweat to cool itself down.<sup>6</sup> Without proper hydration, the increase in body temperature can lead to a heat illness such as heat exhaustion or heat stroke.<sup>6</sup> Some symptoms of heat exhaustion include heavy sweating, cold or clammy skin, weak pulse, nausea, and fainting.<sup>7</sup> Heat stroke can be identified by high body temperature (above 103°F); hot, red dry, or moist skin; rapid and strong pulse; and possible unconsciousness.<sup>7</sup> Avoid heat illness by taking these precautions:

- Wear light, loose fitting clothes during activities in the heat.<sup>6</sup>
- Adjust to new climates by engaging in light to moderate intensity activity, and steadily increase intensity of activities over seven to 14 days.<sup>6</sup>
- Drink eight ounces of fluid 20 to 30 minutes prior to exercising, and continue to drink seven to ten ounces of fluid every 10 to 20 minutes during exertion;<sup>8</sup> only opt for a sports drink before, during, or after high-intensity physical activity exceeding 60 minutes.<sup>9</sup>
- If you experience heat exhaustion, stop the activity and move to a cool location (such as seeking shade if outdoors), loosen clothing, and sip water. If conditions continue, seek medical attention.<sup>7</sup>
- If symptoms of heat stroke emerge, call 911 immediately. While waiting for medical attention, do not drink fluids, and decrease body temperature with cool cloths or a bath.<sup>7</sup>

## Overuse Injuries

Common overuse injuries include wrist fractures, shoulder dislocations, and shin splints.<sup>7</sup> Overuse injuries are caused by taking on too much physical activity too soon, and making repeated training mistakes over long periods of time.<sup>6</sup> This includes increasing the intensity, duration, or frequency of an activity too quickly or using improper technique when pushing yourself past your current physical limits. Safety precautions include:

- Remember to warm up, and cool down before and after exercising. This will help prevent frequent, nagging injuries.<sup>6</sup>
- Ease back into activity. Develop a balanced workout routine and do not increase your training program or activity amount more than 10 percent per week.<sup>6,10</sup>
- Incorporate strength training, core, and flexibility exercise into your workout routine to lower the risk of injury.<sup>10</sup>



- Immediately decrease the intensity of all physical activity when you suspect you may have an injury.<sup>10</sup>

## Water Activity Injury

Between 2005 and 2014, an average of 3,536 people died each year in non-boating accidental drownings, and an additional 332 individuals died from boating-related accidents.<sup>11</sup> About 20 percent of these fatal drowning victims were children ages 14 or younger, and 80 percent of all fatal drowning victims are male.<sup>11</sup> Alcohol is involved in up to 70 percent of water recreation deaths among teens and adults.<sup>11</sup> Some safety precautions include:

- Always wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket when you are out on the water.<sup>11</sup>
- Learn Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR); it can help save the life of a drowning victim before the paramedics arrive.<sup>11</sup>
- Monitor the weather and stay off the water if there is thunder or lightning.<sup>11</sup>
- Use the buddy system to avoid swimming alone.<sup>11</sup>
- Drinking alcohol while swimming affects balance, coordination, and judgment. Leave the drink inside and don't drink before getting in the water.<sup>11</sup>
- Know your swimming ability, and participate in formal swimming lessons to reduce the risk of drowning.<sup>11</sup>

## Make Staying Safe a Priority

It can be tempting to skip safety measures so you can start having fun sooner, but keep in mind that these safety precautions only take a few minutes of your time, while getting injured can sideline you for weeks or even months.

## Additional Resources

For more information on injuries and what you can do to prevent them, visit the resources below:

- [Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's Injury and Violence Free Living](#) Web page offers resources, posters, publications, presentations, and more to help keep you injury free. Resources include [Seasonal Injury Prevention](#) fact sheets.
- [Naval Safety Center](#) offers tips to stay safe year round.
- [U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Resource Center](#) contains extensive information regarding boating safety.



## References

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